

T H E
Humble Address
Of the DISTRESSED
PROTESTANTS
I N
FRANCE,
As it was delivered
T O T H E
French KING.

And now published both in *FRENCH* and *ENGLISH*,
for the satisfaction of all true PROTESTANTS.

L O N D O N,
Printed for N. C. 1681.

To the KING

The Humble Address of the Distressed

PROTESTANTS

OF FRANCE,

as it was delivered to the *FRENCH* KING.

And now published both in *FRENCH* and *ENGLISH*, for the satisfaction of all true *PROTESTANTS*.

S I R,

Your Majesties Subjects of the P. R. Religion, do with all humility represent to your Majesty, that your Declaration of the 17th of *June* last, does so overwhelm them with grief, that they are almost out of themselves; but nevertheless, they are so bold as once more to have recourse to your Majesty, hoping, that being still your most faithful Subjects, they shall not be denyed access for justice; and that rather like God Almighty, your Majesty will be tender to hearken to the voice of the afflicted.

Upon this confidence they throw themselves at your Majesties Feet, and desire you to consider, that this Declaration is directly contrary to all the Edicts, granted to those of that Religion, and particularly to the Edict of Nantes which has been given to them as a perpetual and irrevocable law, and which your Majesty has often confirm'd in many ways; for besides, that this does all along suppose, that your Subjects of that Religion shall enjoy in this your Kingdom all rights as well natural as civil, which are common to any of your Subjects; and that among those rights, that of the Power of Parents over their Children to the age of puberty is one of the most general; the 18th Article of that Edict does expressly provide, that none shall by force take away any Children from their Parents, to Baptize, give them the Sacrament of Confirmation against the will of their Parents.

'Tis well known, that Confirmation is never given to Children till they are Seven years old, and if the Edict forbids to give them Confirmation at that Age, sure much less will it allow them to be at liberty to choose their Religion, and to make Abjuration at that Age of a Religion; in which they were born and educated.

'Tis with the same Intention, that the 38 Article of the same Edict does in express words say, that the Parents making profession of that Religion, may provide their Children with such Tutors and Educators as they shall think fit, nay, that they may name one or more either by Will or Codicil, before a notary or written with their own Hand.

Your Majesty Sir is most humbly supplicated to weigh the force of the word *Education*, even after the Death of the Parents; for it evidently demonstrates, that the Edict had a regard to the paternal Right of Parents over their Children, not only as inviolable during their Life; but extending its self even after their Death; so as no zeal of Religion, nor any other Pretext could take it away; nay it was so far from being limited to the Age of Seven years, that it was to be

be preserv'd during the whole Course of the Education, which scarce begins at that Age, and is very narrowly limited when it ends at that of fourteen.

Besides Sir, The Edict of Nantes is not either the only or the first Law, that speaks in favor of this Power, which being a Law of Nature is as antient as the World, (and 'tis a Maxim, that natural Rights are immutable) but it appears also, that in one of the Instructions of the Protestants answer'd in the Year 1571. under the Reign of *Charles* the Ninth; which was the severest Reign for those of that Religion.

The Power of Fathers over their Children was thought so sacred, that it was said upon the 24th. Article, that Fathers should not be hindred in the Education of their Children, according to the Principles of their Religion, and the Motives of their Conscience, and that even after the Death of the Parents; the Children should be Educated in the same Religion, till they had attain'd the full Age of fourteen Years, and then should be left to their Choice and Liberty.

But Sir, none of your Royal Ancestors have more Authentically acknowledged this Right of Parents than your Majesty. For besides, divers Judgements given in your Council of State in the Years 63. and 65. which are expressly in favor of this Power, your Majesties Declaration in the Year 69. has it in express words, that it is prohibited to all Persons whatsoever, not only to take away from their Parents the Children of the *P. R.* Religion, or to persuade them; but to make them also make any Change or Declaration of Change of their Religion, before they have attain'd the compleat Age of fourteen Years for the Males, and twelve for the Females; and that if they have respectively attain'd the same Age. They the said Children shall, after the Decease of their Parents, remain in the hands of their nearest Relations of the same Religion; and that any that shall detain them shall be oblig'd to restore them back to their Relations. All this has been put in Execution, and confirmed by several Presidents, and particularly by Judgement given by the Arch-Bishop of *Paris* in the Month of *Aug.* 76. by which it is ordain'd, that none of the female Sex, shall be receiv'd into the House of the Propagation of the Faith at *S. d. m.*, till they have attain'd the Age of twelve Years compleat.

Your Majesties Suppliants beg leave to represent to your princely Consideration, the difference, that will be found between the declaration of 1669. and this last of 1681. the first Leaves to Nature, its Rights and Priviledges; to conscience its Motives and Impulses, to the civil and common Laws their Principles and Maxims; to your Parliaments their Rules and constant Methods of Proceeding, to forrain Nations an Example worthy their Imitation, and lastly to the *Catholick Roman* Religion, the Honor of keeping within some Bounds of Equity in Conformity to Reason, and the Practise of the primitive Church, whereas under this new Law, Nature suffers, and groans to see Children torn from the Bosom of their Parents to whom she had given them; and who ought to be more theirs at the Age of Seven years, then before; since 'tis properly at that time, that their Education begins, and that Parents do as it were take Possession of their Right.

The Conscience of your Petitioners will be troubled, and disquieted in the most cruel manner imaginable, since the Paternal care of Children, for their education is one of the most important, and indispensable duties of Conscience; every Parent being responsible to God Almighty for his Childrens actions, while nature has deposited them in his hands.

The civil, and cannon Laws will both speak in favour of your suppliants; for if Children before the age of puberty, which is at fourteen can neither make a will, nor be witnesses, at Law, nor make Vowes, nor do any Act of their own will; how can it be thought reasonable, that they should before that age, make choice of their Religion, which is the most important Act of their whole life. Your Parliaments, Sir, who following the common Principles of reason, and equity, did never yet Subject Children to capital Punishments, before the age of puberty, must now violate that Custom of all Nations, and practis'd in all ages, for by making Children of Seven year old, capable of choosing their Religion, they are at the same time expos'd to contract the crime of those, that are called relaps, and by consequent

do undergoe the capitall Punishment, ordain'd by your Majestys Lawes, in that case.

Forreiners, and Infidells themselves, will think themselves well Authoriz'd by this example, to take the Children of those, who profess a Religion contrary to theirs.

And lastly the Roman Catholick Religion, will hardly avoy'd the reproach of all good Christians, when it shall appeare, that it not onely receives but forces conversions, from Children of Seven years old, that is in an age, when they have but the first appearances of reason, and when their Judgments, scarce begin to Act; and where by consequent any change of their Religion, cannot proceed from a determinate choice, but from a blind obedience, or yielding to the threats, or allurements, that can move them. That it is contrary to the Practice of the primitive Church is so visible, that even admitting your suppliants to be Hereticks; tis most certain, that in Antient times, the Church never took away Children under age, from those that liv'd under the same ties of civil society with them, though at the same time they thought them Infidels. In a word, Sir it is an unheard of practice to this day, in all the Nations of the world, that the Power of Fathers should be restrain'd to Seven years over their own Children, Particularly in Cases of Religion.

Thomas Aquinas one of the greatest Doctors of the *Roman Catholicks* decides positively, that it is not lawful to baptize the Children of the Jews against the Will of their Parents; and that for two Reasons, one, that it was never the Practice of the Church, and the other, that it is against the Course of natural Justice, and when the Kings of *Spain* and *Portugal*, *Sisebut* and *Emanuel* carried on by a Zeal of Religion, went about to practice something like it. The fourth Council of *Toledo* oppos'd the Action of the King of *Spain*; and all the World has blamed the Proceeding of *Emanuel*, when he took away from the Jews their Children under fourteen Years of Age. The famous Bishop *Olorius* who speaks of it says, that it was an Action neither founded in Justice nor in Religion; though it proceeded from a good Intention, and aim'd at a good End, because God Almighty requires from Man-kind a voluntary not a forc'd Sacrifice. It being against his Laws, that any Violence should be offer'd to Conscience, to which he adds this terrible Circumstance, that divers of those unfortunate Fathers threw their Children headlong into deep Wells, and precipitated themselves after them.

It cannot be alledg'd, Sir, that the Declaration of your Majesty does not order the taking away of Children from their Parents, and that it only gives them the Liberty of choosing their Religion. For in the first Place, the Violence is not so much to be look'd upon as offer'd to the Children, but to the Parents whose Children they are by the Gift of God and Nature; 'tis the sence of the same *Thomas Aquinas*, who speaking of the Jews says, that it were injustice to baptize their Children against their Will, because it were taking away from them that paternal Power, with which they are invested by nature, which says he, the Church never did even in the most Christian Princes times, as *Constantine*, and *Theodisius*, who without doubt would have permitted it, had it not been against all Reason. And the Edict of Nantes its self in the 18th Article forbids equally Force and Persuasion, and calls them both Violence, and all Laws have as severely punish'd the Rape of Seduction, as that of force in Children under Age.

Secondly, the Age of Seven years fully attain'd does not hinder, but that as to the Parents the Violence is as great, as if their Children were torn from their Mothers Breasts; because that all Laws both natural and civil do submit Children to their Parents till the Age of Puberty, and therefore 'tis equal to take them away at Seven years old, and in the Cradle.

If it be alledg'd that Children at Seven years old are capable of sinning morally, and so may be admitted to the Choice of their Religion. We answer, that besides that, that Principle is not generally allow'd, and that it would be very hard to judge your Petitioners by Maxims which they do not receive; 'tis easie to see that it is a very unjust and unequal Inference, and that there is a great deal of difference between the first Ideas of good and evil, which Children may begin

to have at Seven years old, and the Decernment or Decision of two Religions, with a determination to leave that, in which they have been brought up to follow another, which must of Necessity be lets known to them, if they are not altogether ignorant of it, and which the World knows to be a choice of so difficult a nature, that it is the Earnest Endeavor of human Mind animated with the Perquisition of its Way to Heaven.

Your Petitioners shall not here touch upon the fatal and sad Consequences which are like to attend the Execution of so severe a Law; the Dispair of Fathers and Mothers, the inevitable Discord between Parents and Children; the Change of Education from the tender Hands of Parents into those of Strangers: the Liberty it gives to ill dispos'd Children who will scorn the Correction of their Parents, having means ready to shake off their Authority, the Exaction of unreasonable Pensions from Parents for the keeping of their Children out of their own Families; the forc'd retreat of many thousands out of your Majesties Dominions; the apprehension that those that remain will be in to have any Children born to 'em, and a thousand other Inconveniencies, and Interruptions of the Bonds of civil Society.

Your Petitioners Sir, are convinc'd as well as all the World, that nothing here can resist your Power; but they know likewise, that your Majesty loves to temper that Power with Sweetness and Justice after the Imitation of God Almighty, who never displays the Infinity of his Power upon his poor Creatures, that he does not at the same time look upon 'em with Eyes of Compassion.

'Tis your Justice to that your Petitioners implore in the Excess of their Grief, and 'tis to you alone that they direct their sighs and tears, taking the Confidence to say as it is true, that they had rather endure all things, and death it self rather than be parted from their Children in so tender an Age, and so be hinder'd from Educating them in their own Religion, according to the Obligation of their Consciences.

Therefore your Petitioners humbly beg, that it may be your Royal Pleasure to revoke and annul the Declaration of the 17th. of *June* last, and to order that that of *February* 1667, shall be in full force, and your Petitioners shall continue to offer up their Vows and Prayers, for your Majesties most prosperous and glorious Reign.

Au R O Y

L' Adresse tres-Humble des

PROTESTANS

DE TRESSEZ en

FRANCE

Comme il estoit presenté au R O Y de F R A N C E.

Sire.

V Ouz Subietes de la R. P. R. remonstrent tres humblement à vostre Majeste, que sa Declaration du 17 de *Jun* derniere plonge d'ance une desolation qui leur laisse à prendre la liberte de le reconnoistre les estoirs pourtant recourir Encore à vostre Majeste, pour suader qui stance les fideles
B Subietes

subjetes, l'accier & la Justice ne leurs feras pas deni é & que limitation de Dieu qui Escounte tous Jours la voix de L'affligé elle ne Rejettera pas leurs plaints, d'ance cette Confiance, Sire, se Jettants aux pieds de Vostre Majeste, nous te supliques tres humblement de considerer que cette declaration est directement contraire aux Edictes accorder à ceux de la dite R. & en particulier à Ledit de nanterre soubz laquelle ils se sont neé qui Leurs à esté donné Comme une Loy perpetuelle & Irrevocable, & que Vostre M. Elle mesme à Confirmer plusieurs manieres Car outre qui, Generall ledict à supposé Constantement que cette suppliande Joniroient dans vostre Royaume de toute se droit tant naturelle que civile que sont Communer à toutes vostres Subjetes, & gentre ce droite, Ceruy qui rende le peure maistre de L'education de lever enfance, maisme au de la aage de puberté en un de plus forte & de & de plus Sacre L'article 18 defende expressement detirer les enfants de peures contre Leurs Grès pour les faire baptizer & Confirmé Loy Scaitque la Confirmation ne se donne que sept anes, & si Ledit de donner aux Enfants de Ceux dd la dite R. à cette aage, ill permet enchoire moienes de leur faire une abjuration formelle dela Religion dans laquelle ils sont nees, cest dans le mesme Esprit que L'article 38. de particulier du mesme Edict, portant enchoire le terme Expree que le pere faisant profession dd la dite R. pouroient pourveu a lever l'enfance à telle Educature que loy leurs sembleras & en substitué en, ou plusieurs puvre testaments Caducile, ou autre declaration passée par devant Notaire ou Escrite & signee de Leur Majeste.

Vostre Majeste Sire est tres humblement suplier De passer force detreme d' Educateur mesme apres lamort de peres car il monstre clairement quil edict à regare le Droit de peres Sur le enfance non seulement Comme Inviolable pendant Leur vie mais Comme une droict qui sestend mesmes a pres la mort que nul zeele dd. R. ou autre pretext ne peut estre, & qui bien loine destre limité à ce temps la, se conserve durant toute la cource de Leducation Laquelle Commence à peine a Sept anes, & serrouvez sord derestraint quand en à determine à quatorze, qui est Laage de Pubesté.

Dailleur Sire.

Ledit de *Nantre* na pas esté en cela la seule ne la premiere Loy, Car outre que Cett la un Droict naturelle ausi ancienne que le monde, et que cette une maxime generale & Constant que le droicts naturelles sont imutables, ill paroist qu' au respondue an ane 1771. soubz le regne de Charle 9. f le temps le plus ourt ceux de la dre R, au trouvant ce Droict de peres sur leurs Enfants: sy inviolable quil fut ditt sur le 24. article que le ne seroient point Empesché en Leducation de Leurs Enfants de Loy Leur R. & conscience & apres lamort de peres les Effects seroient Entretunes en le memes Religions Jusque le temps de quatorze anes completé alors ils seroient en Liberté.

Mais sire au cunde Royes vostres Predicessours na reconnu & declare ce mesme Droict plus authentique que Vostre Majeste car outre plusieurs arres ter rendue en son Consielle destate en mill six cent soix tante troix, & en 1667. qui sont Expree sure cette subiette vostre Declaration de 1669, porte en propre terme, quil est faite de sensés à toutes personnes nous seulment delivre les Enfance de la dite Religion avant Laage de quatorze anes accomplié pour le mather, & de douze anes accomplié pour la se meller, & en attendant quil en ay ent ataint a la dite aage: que Lenfance ne dun pea de la dite Religion demeureront en le maniere de leurs parents de la dite Religion & toutes ceux qui les De teindront sont Contrainte de les rendre.

Cela mesme a este D pour Executer & Confirmer par divers arrestes, & en particulier par un arrest que Mr. Larcheves que de Rheine a faite, Rendre au moie D Aust 1676. par le quelle illa este Exposé, et ordonne quaucune fille ne pourroit Estre dans les maisons de la propagation de la foy à sedan quelle nait ataint le aage de Douze anes accomplié.

Lue V. M. Sire permestre sil luy Plaiiste aux suppliande de luy représenter la difference que veut estre mouver entre sa declaration de 1679. & celev la premiere laicelle à la nature ses privilegeiges, à la Conscience ses moives & ses Impulsions

pulliones aux loy civile & canonique leurs principalites & leurs maximes, aux Parliaments leurs regles constants & ordinaires aux Nations Estranges un Exemple digne de leurs Imitations à la Religions C. R. l'honneur de garder des mesures d'Equité confirme à la droite Raison, & à la pratique de l'Egleze ancienne, au Lieu que soubz cette nouvelle Loy la nature Gemira de voire les Enfants dechere du sein de ceux à qui elle les a donner, & à qui elle le donner plus à l'age de sept Anne q'aucune autre temps parceque cette à cette, à l'age la, proprement que commence l'education & que leur peres entrant veritablement en possession de leurs droits.

La Conscience de suppliance se trouva trouble & Inquiete de la maniere du monde la plus douloureuse, car l'autorité paternelle sur les Enfants pour leur Education & une de plus forte & plus Indispensable devoirs dont la Conscience puisse estre obligée de rendre compte à dieu, Chaque pere estant responsable devant dieu de toute ce que faite son Enfant pendant toute la temps que la nature a déposé eux en Leurs maines, la droite civile & canonique parleront aussi pour les suppliance, car si les Enfants devant l'age de puberté ne pouvant faire une telle ne porte temoinage en Justice ne faire de voeux ne passer aucune act de propre volonté, comment peut en vouloirie qu'avant cette aage ils soyent endroict & en liberté de faire un Choix de Religion, qui est l'act le plus Important de leur vie.

Sire,

Vos Parliaments Sire qui suivant les principes Commune de la raison & d'Equité nont Jamais soumis les Enfants aux peine Capitale avant l'age de puberté se trouvoient obligez de prononcer contre cet usage, de toute le peuple & de toute les secles, car en Rendant les Enfants de sept année capable de Changer de Religion on le Rend à la mesme temps capable de tomber dans le Crime de ceux q'on appelle relapsé & lon le soumet aux peine capitale portre par vostre ordinance. Les Nations Estranges & les Infideles eux mesmes se croient authorizee par cette Exemple à prendre les Enfants de ceux qui professent une religion contraire à leurs.

En fine C. A. R. ne craindre tel point le reproach quand on verras quel force & ad et de conversions à sept Annees à cette dire d'ance une aage ou la raison eamica de fixé ny le Judgment rein de regle & ou par consequent le Changement de Religion ne se auroit proceder que d'ance obeissance aveugle, ne pour-est une pas aussi dire quelle se seigne Entierment de la pratique de l'Eglise chrestient Car en suposant mesme les suppliance comme Heritiques, il est constant que Jamais l'ancienne Eglise, n'a esté les Enfants impuberté de ceux qui vivoient avec ils d'ance une mesme societé Civile quoi qu'ils regardoient estre Infidels. Il est Injoy sire Jusqua present parmi les Chrestienes & d'ance toute les nations du monde qu'on aient comme reduit, & reformé que la puissance des peres sur Leurs Enfants au desoubz de sept année principallimere pour la religion.

Un de plus grand Docteurs de leglise C. A. R. decide ouvertement *Thomas d'Aquino* q'on ne doit point baptizé les Enfants des Juifs contre le gré de leurs peres & cela pour deux raisons, l'une que la pratique de l'Eglise ne Jamais l'approuvé, l'autre que la Justice naturelle y refuse, en effect lors que des Roys d'Espagne, ou du Portugal comme sisebut & Emmanuel, par quel mové d'un zele de Religion, ont voulu Entre prendre quelque choses semblables, la Consiel 4. de Toledo se fit opposé à l'action du premiere, & toute le monde à blâmer l'ordonance que fit Emanuel, pour oster aux Juifs leurs Enfants, de l'age de quatorze année. Oseriez l'Evesque celebre, qui en parle, dit que ce fut une action qui n'estoit fonde, ni en Loy ni en Religion, quoq; quel qu'il soit une bene Intention & tendist à une bonne fin, parceque dieu demande d'un homme un Sacrifice volontaire, & quil ne veut pas le force le conscience. Mais il ajoute cette Circonstance terrible, que plusieurs des ses peres malheureux, ontent Jusque l'excès de Jeter leurs Enfants dans de puite & de se faire eux mesmes.

Il ne di se point sire que la Declaration n'or donne pas Darraché les Enfants

Enfants du sein du peres & qu'elle le laisse simplement en liberté de Choisir la Religion, Cath apoltolique & Rom: car en premiere lieu ill ne faut pas considere la force qu'on fait ceux Enfants mais comme ils sont aux peres a qui la nature les a donner.

Ceste le raisonnement du mesme Docteur *Thomas D'aquin* dont on dient de parler on seroit dit ils In justice aux Juifs, q on baptizoit leurs Enfants contre leurs Grè, car on leurs ravesoit le Droite de la puissance paternelle qu'ils ont sur leurs Enfants ce qui dit ils lèglize na Jammais faite ducent le temps des princes tres chrestiennes, comme Constantine & Theodose qui l'auroient sance doute permet, si cela n'avoist esté contraire à la droit, aussi l'edict de Nanteer en Larr, 18 defend Egalement la force & l'induction, quallifiant len & l'autre un Enleivement toute l'ordinance ont punir aussi severement le rapt de perivasi-on que celui de violence.

En second lieu l'age de sept annee nempesche das quil ne ait autant de force & autant de contrainte à l'egard des peres que sy on ravisoit les Enfants à la mamelle, parceque sy le droit naturel et civile, met les Enfants En la puissance de peres Jusque à l'age de puberté, cette la mesme choses de l'otter à sept annee que de l'otter dele leceau puisque le droit de la puissance paternelle sy trouve Vegallement violé.

Sy l'on dit que les Enfants à sept annee sont capable de pescher mortelles & quain si parvient faire choix d'ane Religion que parle genrallement se principe est fort Incertaine, & qu'il ne seroit pas raisonnable de Jugee les supliance, pas de maxime qu'il ne re con oistant pas, & qui ne voit, sire que la Conséquence n'est pas Juste, & qu'il y a grand Difference entre le premiere lée du bien & du mal, que les Enfants pervient dance les actiones de la vie & le de sernement & de Religion ou plulost de determination a quitter la Croyance dance le quel ils ont esté Elevé pour en sivre une qui leurs & moinee connue.

Ou toute a faite Incognue, cest a dire une choix qui est le plus grand effort de les prit de chemine quand it cherché Uniquemen son salute.

Les soupliance ne touchent sey le triste & facheuse suitee de l'execution, duré loy qui leurs paroist si dure, le desespoire de peres & de meres, la discord inevitable entre les peres & les Enfants, le changement de l'education naturelle que desmeines des peres passer dans les maines des Estrangers, le libertinage des Enfants qui ne Craindront plus la Corection des peres & qui auroit sons Jours une pretext pour luy sou traire l'exactione de pensioner pûon Exigue des peres de l'entretiner de leurs Enfants hors de leur maison & au de sus de leur source, la suite forcer des plusieurs families hors de Royaume, l'aprehansion qu'auroient ceux de la Religion, lailenation, de l'esprit & mille d'autre Inconveniences dance la socite civile.

Les soupliance sire sont convaincue avec toute laterre que sien ne peut resister à vostre puissance mais ils s'avant aussi que Vostre Majeste aime Temperer son autorité & son pouvoir par sa bonte & sa par Justice à l'exemple de dieu mem qui ne de ploy Jammais sa force Infinie sur ses Creatures pu'il ne le regarde en meme temps des yeux de sa Compassion.

Cest donc vostre Justice sire que les supliance Implorent dance l'excees de leurs dou leurs cette a elles quils adressant leurs voix & leurs Laarmee & sance manque ou respect quils le doivent à vostre Majeste Ils osoient dire qu'ils aimoient mieux souffrir toute sortée de maux & lamort mesme que de se voir se paré de leurs Enfants dance une age si tendre & de ne douvoire plus les Elever dance leurs Religion se lon les obligations de leurs Consciénces.

A Cette Cause sire Plaisé a vostre Majeste en revoquant nouvelle Declaratione du 17 on de *juin* derniere ordonne que celle de fevrier 1669 sera Executé selon la forme & tenue & les suppliance continueront leurs veaux & leurs pres pour le glorieux Reigne de Vostre Majeste.

REPRODUCED FROM THE ORIGINAL
IN THE HENRY E. HUNTINGTON
LIBRARY AND ART GALLERY
FOR REFERENCE ONLY.
PERMISSION NECESSARY FOR
REPRODUCTION.